

SHIPPING BOARD'S RECORD OF GRAFT SHOCKS CAPITAL

By Norman Haggood
United News Staff Correspondent

Washington, Aug. 25.—For acuteness of interest in Washington just now first place undoubtedly goes to the tangle in the shipping board. A scandal is usually more popular than a problem and the shipping situation combines a first class scandal with a first-class problem.

Chairman Lasker, meeting a young lawyer, at a dance, asked him what he thought should be done with the wooden ships.

"You ought to keep the wooden ships," the young man said.

"Why?" inquired the heavily laden chairman of the shipping board.

"Because," replied his new acquaintance, "if you do not solve your problem successfully you will need the wooden ships for coffins."

The chairman gave the young man a drink and the dance went on.

WOULDN'T CHANGE JOBS
I am glad I am writing for the newspapers instead of trying to hold down Mr. Lasker's job. Here is one of the recent incidents of his eventful life.

A certain ex-senator, in Washington on business, was called on the telephone by a friend who happened to be in the shipping board entourage.

"If you are going to get in your bid," he said, referring to one of the contemplated sales, "you had better hurry up."

"But when bids were asked for," said the ex-senator, "the time set was the end of this month."

"Yes," said his friend, "I know. But all the same the bids are going to be opened tomorrow."

EX-SENATOR INDIGNANT
Suppressing most of his available profanity the ex-senator called upon the man in charge of the bids. He indicated what he thought of deciding such a matter before all the bids were in.

"Ah," said the official, "we have got all the bids we want."

"Have you," said the visitor, with more

or less fine irony, "And may I ask how many of these bids you mean to send up to Mr. Lasker for decision?"

"Three will be enough."

So the ex-senatorial attorney hied him to Mr. Lasker and repeated his woe.

"Waiting until the end of the month would have done no good," said the chairman. "We have only one bid and it is satisfactory."

"How much is it?"
"I do not know that I ought to tell you but I will. It is \$2,800,000."

"Well," breathed out the inquiring lawyer with some emphasis, "I come here authorized to offer you \$3,800,000."

GRAFT IS EVERYWHERE
Mr. Lasker, of course, was shocked at what his subordinates had been putting over on him. It is not a debatable question; it is a fact that the shipping board is shot through and through with graft.

The move for a senatorial investigation was blocked by the fear of the Democrats that such an investigation would center on the parts of the situation for which the Wilson administration is responsible, and by the fear of administration Republicans that the present regime would suffer from some of the later facts.

Foremost among the later facts stands out the appointment of attorneys. A good deal of the noise is made about the size and number of salaries recently handed out to legal assistants, and there is plenty to be said on both sides of that question. But a much more effectively subtle drive is against the fact that many of these lawyers have been representing shipping interests that are now urging claims against the shipping board.

SENATORS INQUISITIVE
A few senators asked with some natural heat whether they were to vote large appropriations without inquiring into so striking a situation as this. It is not denied that salaries of \$35,000, \$25,000 and \$20,000 are paid to three men who formerly worked for the government at about a quarter of the sum, and who have in the interim worked for a shipping organization that is British in its ultimate control.

Nor is it denied that many other large salaries are paid to lawyers whose past affiliations have identified them with suits against the government now pending.

"Mr. President," said Senator Borah on Monday, "all of this discussion, of course, discloses the fact that it is almost impossible to discuss any question here without discussing it from a purely partisan standpoint."

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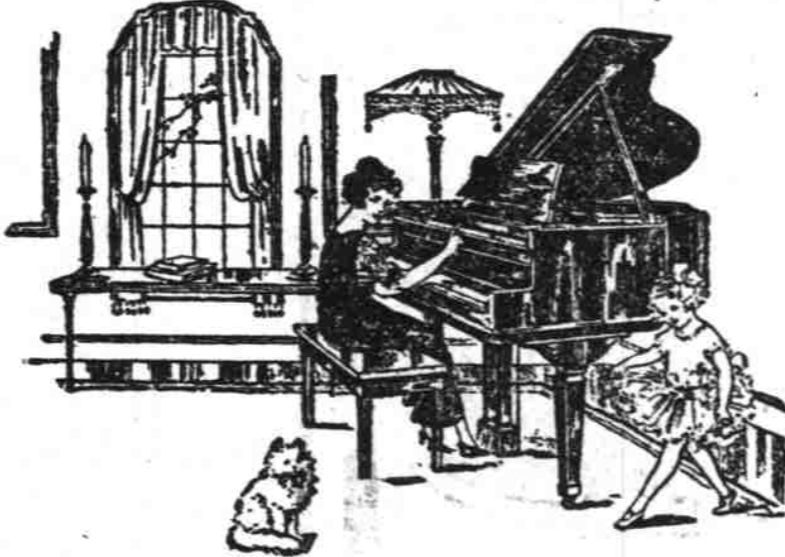
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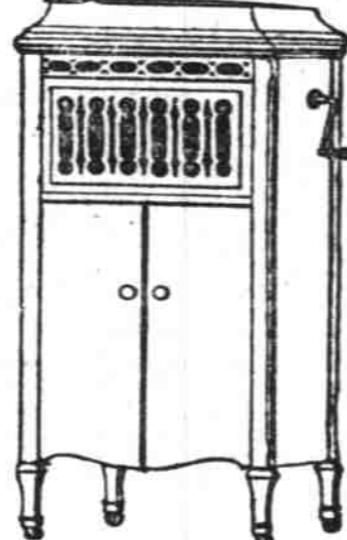
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